BENGAL VAIṢṆAVISM, ORIENTALISM, SOCIETY AND THE ARTS

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DEDICATION

We dedicate this volume to our beloved colleague, Barsa Kelly, who died in the Kanishka crash en route to Bengal, June 23, 1985.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE REGIONAL *BHAKTI* MOVEMENT (SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES)

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Introduction.

Between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries Bengal experienced a great efflorescence of regional culture which culminated under the influence of the *bhakti* movement led by Śrī Caitanyadeva (1486-1533). The adherents of *bhakti* regarded Caitanya as the *Parama-tattva*, i.e., Supreme Reality and hence the sole object of worship. Till the sixteenth century Bengal looked toward north India for sources of religion and culture. In the *bhakti* movement Caitanya emerged as the sole source of inspiration and the model of spiritual experience. The presence of God among them gave the adherents of *bhakti* a unique self-confidence and dynamism. Caitanya became the symbol of regional Bengali cultural identity.

At least two phases in Caitanya's spiritual development can be discerned. During the first phase in Nabadwip Caitanya gave a broad democratic flavor to the *bhakti* outlook by preaching simple and direct faith among the masses. Unritualistic worship by means of simple *nāma-saṁkīrtana* will straight away lead to *prema-bhakti*, which is the highest spiritual attainment. Everyone, irrespective of caste and sex, was entitled to attain *prema*. This message of *bhakti* had a tremendous appeal among the different sections of the society including the secret religious sects, such as the Sahajiyās, who commanded large followings.

After assuming *saṁnyāsa*, which marks the latter phase of his life, Caitanya emphasized more than freedom of spirit, the discipline of the soul through devotion, in Rādhā-like spirit, to Kṛṣṇa. He became the embodiment of intense devotion. But what was more significant at that time was his deputation of two brothers from the court elite of Bengal, the Karnat Brahmans, Sanātana and Rūpa, to develop canonical literature of *bhakti* in the heartland of Puranic Brahmanism, at Brindaban. In this project Sanātana and Rūpa were joined by their nephew Jīva and Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, also a Karnat Brahman. Together the four Gosvāmīs laid the theoretical foundation of what is known as Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism.

The endeavors of the Gosvāmīs in Brindaban brought the *bhakti* movement of Bengal into touch with the broader forces of Indian spiritual tradition both of the Ganga plains and of Karnataka. The interpretation of *bhakti* by the Gosvāmīs was more affected by hierarchical and authoritarian tendencies implicit in the medieval Indian religious tradition. The pristine democratic flavor of the Nabadwip phase, which persisted in Bengal even after the demise of Caitanya, was replaced in the Gosvāmīs' system by more stringent and hierarchical practices. This was combined with concentration of focus on Kṛṣṇa as the supreme deity of the faith rather than on Caitanya, who was conceived of as accessory to Kṛṣṇa.

Caitanya may have conceived of the efforts of his associates in Bengal and Brindaban as complementary to each other in the development of the *bhakti* movement. But due to divergences in attitudes and methods the two wings of the *bhakti* movement operated independently of each other and after Caitanya's death became mutually exclusive. Yet Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism represents syncretism between the tradition of mass preaching in Bengal and the Gosvāmī system developed in Brindaban. In the following passages I propose to deal with the history of this development.

Interaction between the tradition of *bhakti* movement in Bengal and the Gosvāmī system: emergence of syncretic faith.

After the death of Sanātana and Rūpa, which occurred between 1556 and 1558,[1] Jīva came to be recognized as the greatest authority of the Gosvāmī system. Sometime between 1566 and the early 1570s Jīva entrusted three promising Bengali students, namely, Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, Narottamadāsa and Śyāmānanda Pāla, with the mission of propagating the Gosvāmī system in Bengal.[2] Śrīnivāsa, Narottama and Śyāmānanda had come to Brindaban for studying the Vaiṣṇava *śāstras* and to receive spiritual training under the guidance of the stalwarts of Brindaban. During their sojourn in Brindaban all of them had come to be thoroughly conversant with the Gosvāmīs' system and had developed close intellectual and spiritual acquaintance with the leading personalities of Brindaban including Jīva.[3]

Śrīnivāsa, Narottama and Śyāmānanda brought to Bengal the creed systematized by the Gosvāmīs of Brindaban. But the tenets, doctrines and dogmas and the method of worship of the new creed apparently varied strongly with the trends that characterized the tradition of the *bhakti* movement in Bengali. As indicated above, the *bhakti* movement in Bengal had split into various groups after the demise of Caitanya in 1533. But the followers of the *bhakti* movement strongly adhered to *Gaura-pāramyavāda* (i.e., the teaching that Caitanya is himself the ultimate object and goal, *upeya*, of worship). The tradition of unconventional congregational worship and the ideas of freedom, fellowship and fraternity were firmly entrenched in them. It is in this context that Śrīnivāsa, Narottamadāsa and Śyāmānanda Pāla arrived in Bengal with the task of propagating the creed developed in Brindaban.

Among the three missionaries sent by Jīva, Śyāmānanda Pāla concentrated on the border areas between Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.[4] Śrīnivāsa preached in Mallabhum in southwest Bengal and in a few other places and taught *bhakti śāstra*. He also visited a few centers of the *bhakti* movement and met leading Vaiṣṇavas for the purpose of interaction and mutual understanding.[5] But the actual task of reorganizing the Vaiṣṇavas movement between the Gosvāmīs' system and the tradition of the *bhakti* movement was taken up by Narottamadāsa.

Narottama settled down in the village of Kheturi (Rajshahi district, now in Bangladesh). Then he set himself the task of combining the different Vaiṣṇava groups into a coordinated movement. Narottama toured extensively in Bengal and went to Puri in order to visit the important centers of the *bhakti* movement and meet the leaders of the different groups.[6] After the tour, Narottama organized a *mahotsava* (literally, great festival) for celebrating the installation of six sets of images at Kheturi. It is not clearly known when the festival occurred. But it appears to have taken place sometime between 1576 and 1582.[7] On Narottama's invitation most of the leading Vaiṣṇavas (*Mahāntas*) representing the various shades of opinion, including the adherents of the Gosvāmī system and the Sahajiyās, attended the festival along with their followers. The Mahāntas included: Jāhnavā Devī, Nityānanda's widow and the leader of his followers; Achyutānanda, son of Advaita; Raghunandana, the leader of the *Gaura-nāgaravādī* group; Śrī Caitanyadāsa, who represented the *Rasarāja* group; Hṛdaya-caitanya of Kalna, Jadunandana, disciple of Gadādharadāsa; and the adherents of the Gosvāmī system represented by Śrīnivāsa, Śyāmānanda, Rasikamurāri, and Rāmacandra Kavirāja.[8] Due to the presence of such diverse groups the Kheturi *mahotsava* can be taken as the earliest occasion for consolidating the Vaiṣṇavas belonging to the different groups ranging from the adherents of the Gosvāmī system to the *Gaura-pāramyavādīs*, who included the highly esoteric Sahajiyās, under the aegis of the systematized and canonical creed propounded in the voluminous texts composed by the Gosvāmīs of Brindaban and reinforced by the spiritual authority of the Vaiṣṇava luminaries of Brindaban.

In the presence of the vast congregation composed of the various groups of the Vaiṣṇavas and with the approval of the assemble *Mahāntas*, Narottama installed six sets of images, five of which represented the divine couple Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in their different aspects. The remaining one was Gaurāṅga-Viṣṇupriyā, representing Caitanya and his wife.[9] All the images were consecrated according to the rules laid down by the Gosvāmī texts.[10]

The installation of the Gaurāṅga-Viṣṇupriyā image along with the images of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa according to the rituals prescribed by the Gosvāmīs indicates a most interesting aspect of the attitude and efforts of Narottama. The devotees belonging to the Nabadwip circle, who formed the core of the *bhakti* movement in the Gauḍa-mandala, i.e., in Bengal, came under the influence of Caitanya at the pre-*saṃnyāsa* stage of his life and were devoted to the charming young man that he was. The early Bengali *padas* on Caitanya composed by the poets of the Gauḍa-mandala refer to his beautiful young appearance and use the names Gaurāṅga, Gorā or Gaurakiśora (Fair-limbed, Fair, Fair Lad) which are associated with it.[11] The images of Caitanya which were conceived by the Gauḍa-mandala devotees represent Gaura dressed as a respectable young man, as a householder. The Gosvāmīs of Brindaban, however, who had seen Caitanya in his *saṃnyasa* life only, invariably refer to his *Yativeśa* (ascetic's appearance) while adoring the Master in their texts. Naturally the Gosvāmī texts do not recognize the existence of Viṣṇupriyā, Caitanya's wife. By installing the Gaurāṅga-Viṣṇupriyā image in Kheturi Narottama demonstrated the acceptance by the adherents of the Gosvāmī system of *Gaura-pāramyavāda*, in other words Caitanya's selfhood as Kṛṣṇa, who is the *Parama-tattva* (ultimate reality) according to the view of the Gosvāmīs. The appearance of Viṣṇupriyā by the side of Caitanya reinforces the identification of Caitanya as Kṛṣṇa, for Viṣṇupriyā is conceived of as the consort of Caitanya in the same way as Rādhā is the *hlādinī-śakti* (energy of bliss) of Kṛṣṇa. Pairing of Viṣṇupriyā with Caitanya may have been a concession to the Sahajiyās as well. The Sahajiyās had already begun to focus on the *śakti*, i.e., the Female Principle in Caitanya.

Two types of *kīrtana* songs are prevalent among the Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal. These are *nāma-saṃkīrtana* and *līlā* or *rāsa-kīrtana*. Vaiṣṇava *kīrtana* might have originated in the earlier tradition of the Buddhist Sahajiyā and Nāthapanthī *charyā* songs as well as in the *pāñchālī* or *vijaya* songs narrating the exploits of different gods and goddesses.[12] A preliminary form of *kīrtana* might have been prevalent in Bengal before the advent of Caitanya. But Caitanya appears to have evolved a distinctive and perhaps an improved form of *nāma-saṃkīrtana*, i.e., reciting and chanting the name of God and to have given it a special significance as the principal means of worship with tremendous spiritual potentialities.[13] *Līlā-kīrtana* is a long narrative song dealing with the exploits (*līlā*) of God. A narrative is composed of lyrics written by the Vaiṣṇava poets on a particular episode arranged sequentially and woven into a systematic course of development explicating certain ideas. Narottama is credited with having organized the structure of *līlā-kīrtana* in accordance with the definition and interpretation of the different *rasas* (devotional sentiments) as given by the Gosvāmīs. Indeed *līlā-kīrtana* became a most powerful medium of spreading the ideas of the Gosvāmīs among the common people.

In the Kheturi *mahotsava* Narottama introduced the *līlā-kīrtana* designed by him. Rūpa Gosvāmī had classified *kīrtana* into three types, namely *nāma-kīrtana*, *guṇa-kīrtana* and *līlā-kīrtana*, all of which are songs on Kṛṣṇa or about him.[14] But in the Kheturi festival Narottama began the proceedings with the preface of *Gaura-candrikā*, i.e., songs in adoration of Gaura-chandra (Fair Moon, i.e., Caitanya).[15] The *Gaura-candrikā* songs consisted of *padas* pertaining to *Gaura-pāramyavāda* composed by the poets of Gauḍa-mandala. The practice of prefacing *Kṛṣṇa-līlā* by *Gaura-candrikā* represents the idea of identifying Caitanya with Kṛṣṇa but with a particular emphasis

on Kṛṣṇa worship. Narottama appears to have projected the same idea by installing a Gaurāṅga-Viṣṇupriyā image along with five Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa images. Apparently Narottama sought to reconcile the Gosvāmī system with the tradition prevalent in Bengal. He accepted Caitanya as being equal to Kṛṣṇa, but with an indication that Kṛṣṇa is more equal and hence is the main object of worship. This is inevitable because Narottama did not intend to deviate from the Gosvāmīs, whose theological and metaphysical speculations and devotional sentiments had been built up entirely on the basic doctrine of Kṛṣṇa being the *Parama-tattva*.

The festival of Kheturi offered the Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal the opportunity to know closely the Gosvāmī system with modifications as envisaged by its adjustments to the tradition of *bhakti* movement of Bengal with particular reference to *Gaura-pāramyavāda*. The modified system provided the Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal with what they lacked hitherto, namely, a systematic formulation of their faith in the form of concrete *śāstrīya* discourses. The Kheturi congregation may have been conceived as a common platform on which the different groups of the *bhakti* movement could meet each other for interaction and mutual understanding under the influence of the Gosvāmī system.

Apart from *Gaura-pāramyāvada* Narottama had adapted to the Gosvāmī system certain other major features of the *bhakti* movement of Bengal which expanded the popular base of this mission. As indicated above, Caitanya had emphasized the immense potential of *saṃkīrtana* as the means of acquiring *prema* (devotion ripened into love for God), the highest state of spiritual experience. But the Gosvāmīs considered *saṃkīrtana* to be merely a religious practice with limited significance. Notwithstanding the views of the Gosvāmīs, Narottama affirmed the immense spiritual potentialities of *nāma-kīrtana*. According to Narottama one can transcend all worldly limitations by means of *nāma-kīrtana*. Following Caitanya, Narottama firmly declared that even the lowliest is entitled to perform *nāma-kīrtana* in his own right. It can be performed at any time and at any place without any spiritual guidance or ritual.[16] This may be construed as negation of the injunctions of the *Haribhakti-vilāsa* which prescribes *vaidhī-bhakti* for the common laity and considered spiritual initiation by *guru* indispensable.

The *Haribhakti-vilāsa* (a Sanskrit compendium on rules for Vaiṣṇava practices compiled by Gopālabhaṭṭa Gosvāmī in collaboration with Sanātana) has upheld the validity of caste hierarchy in religious matters. But in pursuance of the tradition of the *bhakti* movement in Bengal, Narottama disregarded caste restrictions in his preaching. In the Kheturi Festival the Caṇḍālas, one of the lowliest castes of Bengal, were received with great consideration.[17] Narottama was a Kāyastha, a high ranking Śūdra caste of Bengal. In spite of the specific injunction of the *Haribakti-vilāsa* prohibiting a lower caste *guru* from imparting initiation to an upper caste person, Narottama initiated several Brāhman disciples.[18] Śyāmānanda, who was born in a lower Śūdra caste, had also initiated higher caste devotees including Brāhmans.[19] Considerable commotion was generated by Narottama initiating Brāhmans. In the context of the tension a conference was held at Kheturi in which many Brāhman scholars were present. In this conference, which endorsed Narottama's right to initiate Brāhmans, Śrīnivāsa and Vīrachandra, the son of Nityānanda, who succeeded Jāhnavā as the head of the followers of Nityānanda, announced that a person who has imbibed devotion to Kṛṣṇa is greater than a Brāhman.[20] This position closely resembles the views of Caitanya.[21]

Another important aspect of the efforts of Narottama and his colleagues is their enthusiastic promotion of *mañjarī sādhanā*, a highly esoteric mode of meditation. *Mañjarī sādhanā* follows from the elaboration of the *rāgānugā* meditation as conceived by the Gosvāmīs. Kṛṣṇa unites with Rādhā, who is the transfiguration of his own *hlādinī śakti* (energy of bliss) as matter of

natural process. In their *līlā* (divine sport) the divine couple is assisted and protected by a group of young girls, the *sakhīs*. They originate in Kṛṣṇa being the embodiments of his *svarūpa śakti* (the power he possesses by virtue of his ultimate nature). Due to this reason the *sakhīs* have in them the motive force of *rāga* (spontaneous, deep and inseparable absorption in Kṛṣṇa) and are *nitya-siddha* (always emancipated by virtue of their existence). Thus the *sakhīs* stand in intimate relation to Kṛṣṇa. According to the complete scheme of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava hagiology there is around the *sakhīs* a group of young maids called *mañjarī*. The *mañjarīs* are also manifestations of Kṛṣṇa's *svarūpa śakti* and their devotion to Kṛṣṇa is *rāgātmikā* (pertaining to *rāga*). As such, the *mañjarīs* are also *nitya-siddha*. But the *mañjarīs* rank below the *sakhīs* and are subservient to the *sakhīs*. In this capacity they serve Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in their *līlā* and enjoy the right to remain with Kṛṣṇa. But they are not Kṛṣṇa's *paramapreṣṭā* (most dear ones), to which position the *sakhīs* belong.

Rāgānugā bhakti has two aspects, namely, *bāhyā* (overt) and *antarā* (internal). The *antarā* aspect, which involves emotional sublimation of human sentiments, is considered to be more efficacious. In practicing *antarā rāgānugā bhakti* the meditator adopts in his mind a *sakhī* or a *mañjarī* as the ideal of his *siddha deha* (emancipated being) and endeavors to imitate her characteristics in respect to appearance, attitude and function by means of mental exercise so that he can prepare himself for serving Kṛṣṇa. However, it is better to take resort to a *mañjarī* than to a *sakhī*. *Jīva* (phenomenal being) is the manifestation of the *taṭasthā śakti* (accidental power) of Kṛṣṇa and hence is actually incapable of adopting the *bhāva* (attitude) of those who are the most dear to Kṛṣṇa. In view of the limitations of *jīva* the position of *mañjarī* is more conducive for his *sādhanā*. The meditator may even seek to serve the *mañjarī*.[22]

All these ideas follow from the Gosvāmī interpretation of *rāgānugā bhakti*, according to which man cannot attain *rāgātmikā bhakti* but can prepare himself for access to the land of eternal love by taking resort to the devotional sentiments of the *parikaras* of Kṛṣṇa. However, in their canonical texts the Gosvāmīs do not refer to *mañjarī sādhanā* as a mode of *rāgānugā* meditation. Yet there are reasons to believe that *mañjarī sādhanā* originated with the Gosvāmīs, particularly Rūpa and Raghunāthadāsa. In their devotional compositions, namely *stavamālā* by Rūpa and *stāvāvalī* by Raghunāthadāsa the Gosvāmīs have indicated passionate desire to serve Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in various manners. The services they intend to perform include menial services for the divine couple even during their union. These do not befit the position of the *sakhī*, whose duty is to advise Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa on the means by which they could meet each other and to protect them from troubles and hazards. As the later sources indicate, menial services are performed by the *mañjarīs* only.[23] The Gosvāmīs may also have practiced *mañjarī sādhanā*. In fact, Kavi Karṇapūra and Narottamadāsa explicitly state that the Gosvāmīs had acquired success in *mañjarī sādhanā*.[24]

The concept of *mañjarī sādhanā* was developed into a complete system of meditation by Narottamadāsa, Śrīnivāsa and their close associates and disciples, such as Rāmachandra Kavirāja. They defined the hierarchy between the *sakhīs* and the *mañjarīs* with respect to their position *vis-à-vis* Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and distinguished between the types of services that the *sakhīs* and the *mañjarīs* are supposed to perform. The *mañjarīs* serve Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in different manners. Their functions include preparing bed for the divine couple, massaging their feet and fanning them when they are engaged in love-making and to make arrangements for their comfort after the union. The *sakhī* functions are also related to the love dalliances of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. But as indicated by their position of *parama-preṣṭā*, the *sakhīs* do not remain on the spot when Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā enjoy themselves. But the inferior position to which the *mañjarīs* are entitled require them to attend upon the divine couple even during their union.[25]

The *mañjarīs* hold the position of menial in the service of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. But spiritually the position of the *mañjarīs* has deep significance. They remain in close relationship with the union of the two aspects in the nature of the Absolute Reality, namely, the enjoyer (the Male par excellence) and his female principle, the enjoyed. They observe the source of supreme love which the union creates but never desires to be enjoyed. Through intense emotional identification with the attitude of the *mañjarī* the meditator tries to transcend *puruṣābhimāna*, the pride as a male, or more broadly, human instincts. Thus *mañjarī sādhanā* is a systematic exercise for transforming a highly erotic symbolism into an acute spiritual process towards an understanding of the nature of the Absolute Reality.

Soon after it was introduced in Bengal, *mañjarī sādhanā* became widely prevalent among the different sections of the Vaiṣṇavas in Bengal. Numerous *padas* datable to the seventeenth century testify to its popularity. It offered a complete system of meditation in the *rāgānugā* way related to *madhura rasa*, which seems to have been the dominant devotional sentiment in Bengal. *Mañjarī sādhanā* was also compatible with the *rāgānugā* way of the *dāsya rasa*, (devotional sentiment of servitude). Indeed *mañjarī sādhanā* combined with *madhura* a strong sense of *dāsya*. But the more important thing about *mañjarī sādhanā* is that it proved to be instrumental in integrating the Sahajiyās with the main trend of the Vaiṣṇava movement in Bengal which was organized by Narottama and his colleagues.

Apparently the ideology of the Sahajiyās was totally incompatible with the ideology of *mañjarī sādhanā*. According to the *rāgānugā* doctrine as interpreted by the Gosvāmīs, phenomenal beings cannot even attain position of the divine associates of Kṛṣṇa; their *sādhanā* consists in following the devotion of Kṛṣṇa's associates. On the contrary, the Sahajiyās conceive every man and woman to be intrinsically divine in nature since they represent the Male and the Female Principle of the Absolute Reality. By means of *sādhanā* every man and woman can discern their pure nature as Śiva and Śakti or Prajñā and Upāya. The supreme bliss arising out of the union of the two becomes the highest state whereby one can realize the ultimate nature of the Absolute Reality. As Shashibhusan Dasgupta has pointed out, the Sahajiyās had undergone a process of change both ideologically and methodologically under the influence of Vaiṣṇavism. The transformation was possible because the Buddhist Sahajiyās had modified the original Mahāyāna doctrine of Ultimate Reality into a positive state of Vacuity and perfect enlightenment which is *Sahaja*.[26] The Vaiṣṇava concept of the Ultimate Reality is also a "positive state, though of a supra-mental nature, of eternal flow of divine love."[27] Drawing upon the Vaiṣṇava idea of the two aspects of the Ultimate Reality, namely, the enjoyer (Kṛṣṇa) and the enjoyed (Rādhā) the Sahajiyās interpreted the final positive state arising out of the union of the two aspects, called *Rasa* and *Rati* in the Sahajiyā parlance, as the state of supreme love. Transformation of ideology led to change of methodology. There was in the Sahajiyā Buddhist cult a tendency towards psychological development rather than emphasis on psycho-physiological yogic practices which constitute a major characteristic of the esoteric sects. The Buddhist Sahajiyās sought to raise the mind by means of yogic control of sex emotions to a state at which it transcends all temporal relations and meanings. This is the state of supreme bliss, the absolute state of *Sahaja*. Under the influence of Vaiṣṇavism the Sahajiyās concentrated more on psychological development.[28]

Mañjarī sādhanā offered the Sahajiyās further opportunities for realizing supreme love through psychological development. As indicated above, the Sahajiyās believe that in the ultimate analysis union of the man and woman is a potential means of realizing supreme love. But pure love arises only when man and woman can realize their true divine self by removing the worldly principles of nescience and grossness through continued and stringent mental discipline. All animal instincts must be eliminated from both body and mind

so as to be fit for practicing true love. "This strictness has . . . been frequently emphasised by the condition that a man must do completely away with his nature as a man and transform his nature to that of a woman before he takes the vow of love."[29] In this respect the Sahajiyās conform to the Gosvāmī concept that *jīvā* (phenomenal being), being the manifestation of the *taṭasthā śakti* (accidental power) of Kṛṣṇa, is, after all, *prakṛti* (female) and Kṛṣṇa is the only male and hence the sole object of love. It is precisely at this point that the Sahajiyās come closest to *mañjarī sādhanā* despite their doctrinal divergences with the Gosvāmī system. This is suggested because *mañjarī sādhanā* is also a systematic exercise through intense mental discipline to stimulate in man the attitude of *prakṛti* and to shake off *puruṣābhimāna* (the pride as being male) as an essential condition for identifying himself with the devotional sentiments of the *mañjarīs*.

The Sahajiyās, at least a large section of them, had accepted the ideology of *mañjarī sādhanā*. The Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇava mode of worship has been systematized by Mukundadāsa in the *Siddhānta-candrodaya*. Mukunda was the disciple of Kṛṣṇadasa Kavirāja, the author of the *Śrī Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*,[30] who, according to Narottama and the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *yogapīṭha* diagram, had achieved success in *mañjarī sādhanā*.[31] Several Vaiṣṇava *padas* (lyrics) pertaining to Sahajiyā doctrine have been quoted in *Siddhānta-candrodaya* by way of illustration and explanation. Some of these *padas* indicate the transformation of the Sahajiyā mode of meditation in terms of *mañjarī sādhanā*.[32] A more clear evidence of the adoption of *mañjarī sādhanā* by the Sahajiyās may be found in some of the *padas* by Choṭa Vidyāpati contained in the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇava text called *Rasasāra*. Choṭa Vidyāpati unambiguously says that the meditator should try to place himself in the environment of Brindaban and follow the Gopīs; an attempt to realize *Sahaja* in his own person will inevitably lead him to the worst of hells.[33] In another *pada* the poet says that Kṛṣṇa is the only male, he contains in him the essence of man. The worldly male should conceive himself as *prakṛti* (female) and seek the grace of Kṛṣṇa.[34]

Baghnapara was an important center of Sahajiyā *Rasarāja sādhanā* led by the descendants of Banśībadana. But the Gosvāmīs of Baghnapara practiced *mañjarī sādhanā* by adopting Anaṅgamañjarī as the *siddha deha*. Even the later Sahajiyā sects, such as the Sāhebdhanī, which developed in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries and remained independent of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava system, adopted the symbolism of *mañjarī sādhanā* as a means to transcend animal instincts.[35]

Epilogue.

Narottama and his colleagues reconciled the Gosvāmī system with the tradition of the *bhakti* movement in Bengal, particularly *Gaura-pāramyavāda*, which was one of the most important symbols of regional Bengali culture and identity. The reconciliation was the crucial factor in the third and the final phase of the *bhakti* movement in Bengal. It provided the different groups of the *bhakti* movement with a theoretical and canonical base of the ideology of *bhakti*. On the other hand, it linked them with the main stream of Purāṇic Brāhmanism, particularly Vaiṣṇavism, and their pan-Indian dimensions. Besides, the syncretic approach of Narottama and his colleagues offered the Sahajiyās the opportunity to integrate themselves with the main trend of the *bhakti* movement. The Sahajiyā sect, as noted above, had a very large following among the common people, particularly in the lower strata of the society. Integration of the Sahajiyās consolidated the broad social base of the *bhakti* movement. The syncretic approach of Narottama and his colleagues essentially based on the Gosvāmī system provided the Vaiṣṇavas in Bengal with a standard version of the faith and practices which was

acceptable to all. The Vaiṣṇavas belonging to the different groups did not merge to constitute a central organization in the form of a church or a central authority as was the case with the Śrī or the Rāmānandī or Vallabhācharī *sampradāyas*, for instance. But the common acceptance by the different Vaiṣṇava groups of the modified version of the Gosvāmī system allowed the Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal as a whole to be known as Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava, the name by which the followers of Caitanya had come to be known as distinct from the other Vaiṣṇava sects in the context of the Brajamandala. Then *niṣṭhā* (firm faith and deep attachment), to the canonical aspect of religion which the acceptance of the Gosvāmī system involved, gave rise to the *naiṣṭhīka* category. This meant the standard or the recognized form of Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal as distinct from the esoteric cults such as the Bāul, Sāhebdhanī, Kartābhajā or Kiśorībhajā, which are related to Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism.

The syncretic approach of the final phase of the *bhakti* movement sought to rehabilitate Caitanya as the supreme deity of the faith. But the effort was confined mostly to juxtapose both Kṛṣṇa and Caitanya as the *Paramatattva* without trying to explain the Caitanya phenomenon in terms of a canonical system. In the absence of a canonical interpretation of the *Gaura-pāramyavāda* the doctrine remained an adjunct to the central focus of Kṛṣṇa. There was no attempt to systematize Caitanya worship in terms of theology and philosophy. As such, Caitanya's position as the source of supreme love continued to be ambiguous and more a matter of personal faith and experience than a central feature in a system of belief. Even Narottamadāsa, who was a passionate devotee of Caitanya, tended to accept the Gosvāmīs' view of Caitanya (as *upāya*, means, rather than *upeya*, object, goal) in his theological and doctrinal writings. In his *Nāma-cintāmaṇi* Narottama firmly declares that Kṛṣṇa is the only object of worship, the Absolute Reality, and that there is nothing which is comparable to him.[36] In the *Rāgamālā* Narottama actually refers to Caitanya as a *mañjarī*.[37]

Jīva died in 1592. After his death the intellectual and spiritual leadership of Brindaban rapidly declined. During the seventeenth century there developed in Bengal several centers of Vaiṣṇava learning and literature, such as Bisnupur, Sri Khanda, Baghnapara, Śantipur, Budhui, Bharampur and Gopiballabhpur, which emerged as the sources of authoritative interpretation of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. Apparently in the final phase of the development of the *bhakti* movement the focus had shifted back to Bengal. But the scholarly and literary pursuits in these centers were mostly confined to interpretation and translation into Bengali of the Gosvāmī texts. Even the critics of the Gosvāmīs like Viśvanātha Cakravartī did not try to develop an alternative to the Gosvāmī system. The doctrine of *Gaura-pāramyavāda* continued. *Padas* extolling the divinity of Caitanya were composed in the eighteenth century. But even before the middle of the seventeenth century *Gaura-pāramyavāda* ceased to be a major source of inspiration. Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal came to be characterized by Kṛṣṇa worship and confined to the framework of the Gosvāmī system. In this context Caitanya came to be regarded as an *avatāra* (incarnation) of Kṛṣṇa who was born in Nabadwip with the specific purpose of propagating *bhakti*. As such Caitanya is an object of adoration in the path of devotion to Kṛṣṇa who alone is the Supreme Being. From the early decades of the seventeenth century till the end of the nineteenth century a large number of Vaiṣṇava temples were built in Bengal. Built in the regional Bengali style these temples represent the continuity of a symbol of regional Bengali cultural identity in a stagnant architectural form.[38] Most of these temples are dedicated to the worship of Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu. Only a few were built for the worship of Caitanya.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The article of Dr. Sanyal included in this volume is a portion of a much longer draft submitted by him entitled "Transformation of the

Regional *Bhakti* Movement in Bengal and the Emergence of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism (Sixteenth Century and Seventeenth Century)." For reasons of time and expense it was not feasible to include the entire submission, itself a portion of an anticipated book on the subject by Dr. Sanyal. In the longer submission he outlines the characteristics of the regional Bengali culture and discusses the *bhakti* movement of Bengal as manifesting regional self-confidence expressed in simple, direct *bhakti*. He also discusses the emergence of Brindaban as an alternative focus of the *bhakti* movement of Bengal.

The portion published here grows out of these prior discussions, but has a coherence of its own--as well as relationships with other papers in the Vaiṣṇava section of the conference--which warrants its publication as an independent article.

NOTES

1. Nareśchandra Jana, *Brindābaner Chay Gosvamī* (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1970), pp. 64-65, 88-89.

2. *Prema-vilāsa* (in Bengali) by Nityānandadāsa, 2nd Rādhāramaṇ Jantra edn, (Baharampur, Mursidabad, B.E. 1318 = A.D. 1911-12), XII, pp. 143-60; *NV*, III, pp. 40-41. For date, see Nīradprāsad Nāth, *Narottamadāsa O Tānhār Rachanāvalī* (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1975), p. 16; Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay, *Caitanyadeva* (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1984), p. 90.

3. *Prema-vilāsa*, XII, pp. 134-43; *Narottama-vilāsa* (in Bengali) by Narahari Cakravartī, Kamala Jantra edn. (Calcutta, B.E. 1262 = A.D. 1855-56), II, pp. 38-39.

4. *NV*, III, p. 41; *Śrī Śrī Śyāmānanda Prakāśa* (in Bengali), by Kṛṣṇacaranadāsa, Gopāla-Govindānanda Deva-Gosvāmī (ed.), Śyāmānandī Gadi edn., (Gopiballabhpur, Medinipur, B.E. 1384 = A.D. 1957-58), IV, pp. 145-49, V, VI, VII, VIII, XI, XII, XV, XVI.

5. *Bhakti-ratnākara* (in Bengali) by Narahari Cakravartī, Nandalāl Vidyāsagar (ed.), Gauḍīya Mission edn. (Calcutta, 1960), VII, pp. 204-226, 259-293; VII, pp. 506-637; IX, pp. 260-387, 495-575; X, pp. 89-187, 292-329; *NV*, IX, p. 188.

6. *NV*, III, pp. 49-55; IV, pp. 59-73; V, pp. 74-83.

7. Nāth, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

8. *NV*, VI, pp. 97, 100, 104-106, 109, 135, 136, 178.

9. *NV*, VII, p. 115.

10. *NV*, VII, pp. 114-115.

11. For example, see *padas* no. 67-77 in *Vāsu Ghoṣer Padāvalī* (in Bengali), Mālabikā Chākī (ed.), Baṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣat edn. (Calcutta, B.E. 1368 = A.D. 1961-62).

12. Swāmī Prajñanānanda, *Padāvalī Kīrtaner Itihās*, Vol. I, (Calcutta, 1970), pp. 34-35, 119.

13. This has been clearly explicated by Jayānanda in his *Caitanya-maṅgala*, Bimanbehari Majumdar and Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay (eds.), Asiatic Society edn. (Calcutta, 1971), III. 22, pp. 2-6. See also *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*

(in Bengali) by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, Nityānanda Goswāmī (ed.), 3rd Sulabh Library edn., (Calcutta, Caitanyābda 441 = A.D. 1927), I.1. p. 5; I.3. p. 13; I.7. pp. 38-41.

14. Bimanbehari Majumdar, *Caitanya-cariter Upādān* (in Bengali), 2nd edn. (Calcutta, 1959), p. 564.

15. *NV*, VII, p. 118-21; *Prema-vilāsa* specifically says that in the Kheturi festival songs on Caitanya were followed by songs on Kṛṣṇa (XIX, p. 318).

16. *Nāma-cintāmaṇi* by Narottamadāsa in Nāth, op. cit., p. 527-28, 531.

17. *NV*, VIII, p. 137.

18. *NV*, VI, p. 90; IX, p. 189-90; X, p. 193-94, 197-204, 213-14.

19. For Śyāmānanda's caste see *BR* I, pp. 351-54. Śyāmānanda's principal disciple Rasikānanda was Brāhman.

20. Nāth, op. cit., p. 144.

21. *CC*, II.8. p. 131.

22. Nāth, op. cit., pp. 94-95; *Prema-vilāsa*, VI, pp. 65-66.

23. Nāth, op. cit., pp. 95-117.

24. *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā* (in Sanskrit) by Kavi Karṇapūra, 5th Rādhāramaṇ Jantra edn. (Baharampur, Mursidabad, B.E. 1929 = A.D. 1912-13), *śloka*s 180-207; Nāth, op. cit., p. 95.

25. Ibid., pp. 102-17; *Rāgamālā* by Narottamadāsa in ibid., pp. 633-43.

26. Shashibhusan Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, 3rd edn., reprint (Calcutta, 1976), pp. 113-34.

27. Ibid., p. 121.

28. Ibid., pp. 120-22.

29. Ibid., p. 140.

30. Sukumar Sen, "Śrī Khaṇḍer Sampradāy O Caṇḍīdās" (in Bengali), in *Bicitra Sāhitya* (Calcutta, 1956), p. 129.

31. Nāth, op. cit., pp. 110-111; *Rāgamālā* by Narottamadāsa in ibid., p. 639.

32. See, for example the *pada* by Rāy-śekhara in the *Siddhānta-candrodaya* (pp. 157-58) as quoted in Sukumar Sen, (1956), op. cit., p. 122.

33. *Jemati nṛtya (nitya) / Sahaja śuniān / Sāmānya dehete jage / Nā jāne maram / Kare ācharan / Kebal rourabe maje / . . . Brajabhāv laiān / Gopī anugata sar / Nijadehe jebā / Ghatāy sahaj / Āchari te kare āś / Bhane Vidyāpatī / Koṭī janma tār / Rourabete habe bās.*

34. Loc. cit.

35. Sudhir Çakravartī, "Maner Mānuṣer Gabhir Nirjan Pathe" (in Bengali), *Ekshan Śāradīya*, B.E. 1391 = A.D. 1984, p. 19.

36. *Nāma-cintāmaṇi*, in Nāth, op. cit., p. 527.

37. *Rāgamālā*, ibid., p. 639.

38. Hitesranjan Sanyal, "Temple-Building in Bengal from the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Century: A Study in Social Response to Technological Innovation," in Baron De (ed.), *Perspectives in Social Sciences*, I (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 148-55.